

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NICOSI 04086 281512Z
ACTION EUR-12

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E. O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY: ST. BARNABAS MONASTERY

REF: STATE 309879

1. THREE LAST OCCUPANTS OF ST. BARNABAS MONASTERY LEFT THEIR MONASTERY DECEMBER 20. THE THREE ELDERLY MONKS, ABBOT STEPHANOS, AGE 82, FATHER NEKTARIOS, AGE 82, FATHER BARNABAS, AGE 79, HAD EARLIER PETITIONED TURKISH AUTHORITIES FOR PERMISSION TO GO SOUTH, BUT TURKS WERE RELUCTANT TO GRANT THEIR REQUEST WITHOUT (A) SOME SCKNOWLEDGEMENT FROM GOC AND MAKARIOS THAT THE MONKS' DEPARTURE WAS VOLUNTARY AND (B) SOME ASSURANCE THAT THE DEPARTURE WOULD NOT BECOME THE FOCUS OF ANTI-TURKISH PROPAGANDA. IN THE EVENT, PERMISSION WAS GRANTED THROUGH UN GOOD OFFICES AND THE MONKS HAVE NOW BEEN RELOCATED AT STAVROVOUNI MONASTERY IN THE GOC-CONTROLLED SOUTH OF CYPRUS. THEY WERE ALLOWED TO TAKE WITH THEM THEIR PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND THOSE IKONS WHICH THEY THEMSELVES HAD PAINTED.

2. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH GOC-CONTROLLED CBC RADIO FOLLOWING THEIR DEPARTURE THEY INDICATED THAT THEY HAD BEEN GRADUALLY DEPRIVED OF CHURCH PROPERTY AND SUBJECTED TO CONTINUED RESTRICTIONS UNTIL THEY HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO LEAVE. MORE IMPORTANT FACTORS, WE UNDERSTAND, WERE SIMPLY OLD AGE, FAILING HEALTH AND ISOLATION.

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3. CBC DECEMBER 23 REPORTED THAT GOC FONMIN CHRISTOPHIDES HAD SENT A CABLE TO UNESCO DIRGEN CALLING ON ORGANIZATION "TO TAKE ALL POSSIBLE MEASURES" TO PROTECT MONASTERY AND ITS TREASURES, STRESSING THAT THEY WERE LEFT UNPROTECTED BY MONKS' DEPARTURE. "TFSC" SPOKESMAN DECEMBER 25 REACTED SHARPLY, INDICATING THERE IS NO NEED FOR SUCH

UNESCO TRUSTEESHIP WITHIN TURKISH CYPRUS. IN MEANTIME
"TFSC" AUTHORITIES HAVE ANNOUNCED ST. BARNABAS MONASTERY
WILL BE PRESERVED, OPEN TO PUBLIC AS A MUSEUM, AND
GIVEN THE SAME STATUS THAT GREEKS APPLY TO HALA SULTAN
TEKKE (IMPORTANT MOSLEM SHRINE NEAR LARNACA).
CRAWFORD

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